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plaited. Of this leather we also make serviceable bridles, lazos, stirrup-leathers, and, in fact, horse-gear generally. Sometimes we would have a fit of making pipes, and all hands would be busy sawing out wood or hard at work boring the bowls; at others, spurs were the rage, made by the [312] simple Indian method of sticking sharpened nails into two pieces of wood, secured together by thongs fastened under the foot and round the leg; or again, we would work silver, and come out with our knife-sheaths glittering with studs. On non-hunting days, I invariably practised the use of the bolas, and caught almost every shrub on the island.

The evenings were passed in playing the American game of brag. Cash being unknown, and no one being disposed to risk the loss of his gear, the stakes were simply so many black beans to a box of matches; and as much excitement prevailed as if each bean or pavsia had been a five-dollar piece.

Both in our hunting parties and in the house which he [313] had been allowed to occupy, though he occasionally visited the camp on the Chico, I sedulously cultivated the acquaintance of Casimiro. Both the missionaries and Her Majesty's surveyors have made frequent, and often by no means honourable, mention of this Indian, who has always evinced a wish to conciliate the friendship of the English visitors to Patagonia. His history, as I learned it from himself, was a very curious one, and aptly illustrates the conflicting claims of Chilians and Argentines, and the confused politics of the Indians themselves. His father Enfing been killed in an engagement with the Araucanian or Manzaneros Indians. His mother was a Tehuelche; being an inveterate drunkard, [314] whilst visiting the settlements of Rio Negro she bartered the child for a cask of rum to the governor of the fort, a Frenchman named Viba, who was connected with the slave-trade, for at that period Indians seem to have been made slaves of as well as blacks. Viba had Casimiro christened—whence his name Casimiro Viba—and brought up at the Estancia, or

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sheep-farm, where he learnt to speak Spanish fluently. When thirteen years old he ran away and rejoined the Tehuelches Indians, with whom he remained in obscurity for some years, until being in the Southern district, near the Chilian colony of Port Famine, he gained the friendship of [12] one Santorin, a native of Patagones, who had been taken captive by the Indians, but having adopted their manners and customs, and marrying one of the tribe, had risen to the position of a chief. Together these two performed a voyage to Chili, to negotiate with the Government in some matters regarding the protection of Port Famine from Indian raids. Santorin died during the voyage, but Casimiro was well received at Santiago by the then President, Señor Bulnés,* loaded with honours, and given the rank, pay, and rations of a captain in the army. He then returned to Port Famine, where he resided, off and on, for some time. By his own account, he was absent on a hunting excursion when the [13] massacre took place which resulted in the destruction of the colony. The old wandering habits appeared to have taken possession of him, for he subsequently returned to the Rio Negro, and having entered the service of the Buenos Ayrean Government, again proceeded to the South. During this [14] time he resided occasionally with the missionaries, during their journeys to the South, and at their station at Santa Cruz, and entrusted to them his two sons for the purpose of education. The missionaries soon discovered that his objects were purely selfish, and that he had no idea of allowing others to participate in the advantages they could offer; and I am afraid that the labour and cost bestowed on the boys were thrown away, as neither of them appeared to have profited much by their classes. Sam, indeed, could still sing a hymn if there were grog to the fire, and had a lively recollection of material advantages, often saying, 'He was good man, give me gun,' &c. But the youngest 'Graviel,' who also understood a little English, was one of the laziest of the

* Casimiro gave the name as 'Bourne.'

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lazy, and had very undefined notions as to *meum* and *tuum*, as personal experience taught me. 159

In 1865 Casimiro made a voyage to Buenos Ayres, where the Government on this occasion recognised him as head chief of the Tehuelches, and assigned him the rank and pay of lieutenant-colonel in the Argentine army. He was then despatched, in company with an Argentine named Mendoza, to form a settlement at Gregorio Bay. They travelled by land as far as Santa Cruz at which place Mendoza disappeared, being supposed to have lost himself, but in reality having been killed by an Indian, jealousy being, I believe, the cause of the murder. With his right-hand man gone, Casimiro abandoned himself, to drinking, a habit which, as Mr. Cunningham mentions, he had before acquired—perhaps by hereditary development—and ultimately became reduced to the state of poverty in which I found him, owning but two horses for himself, his wife, daughter, and son, with hardly any gear. Indeed, he would have been reduced to great straits but for the kindness of Don Luiz and Mr. Clarke, who, for old acquaintance sake, helped him as much as possible; though his habitual drunkenness made it useless to give him anything valuable whilst there was liquor to be had, as he would exchange anything for drink. As it was my object to have a friend in camp, I made friends with him, and tried to induce him to go north to the Rio Negro, which he at length agreed to do, although he was in great fear of getting into trouble about the loss or death of Mendoza. This man when sober was quick and intelligent, and a shrewd politician. His extensive connections by marriage with all the chiefs, including Rouke and Calfcurá, gave him considerable influence. He was also an expert worker in various Indian arts, such as making saddles, pipes, spurs, lazos, and other gear. He was a powerfully built man, standing fully six feet in his potro boots, with a not unpleasing expression of face, although he had a scar or two which did not add to his beauty. Of his personal

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159 bravery ample proof will afterwards be given; but, like all drunkards, he was uncertain and not to be depended on. This veritable old Blue Beard informed me that he had been married six times; certainly, if all his wives were of the appearance and disposition of his last venture, it is not to be wondered at if he disposed of the former ones; for an uglier, dirtier, more contumacious old hag had never burdened the earth with her weight, owing probably to which latter quality, or quantity, she never, if she could possibly help it, quitted her room. Early in June, an Indian, known in Santa Cruz as El Sourdo, or the left-handed man, came [249] across the river and pitched his toldo on the island. He was the husband of two wives, who lived together in perfect felicity and took care of one another's children. This Indian [322 was, as most of them are, very ingenious in working wood 325] and silver, and was a good addition to our hunting parties; he also quickly learned to play at brag. Casimiro would never descend from his lofty pinnacle of self-importance so far as to enter the kitchen when the general revels were held, but occasionally joined Mr. Clarke and myself at supper and sat telling stories for an hour or two.

[97] The sketch of our life at Paben would be very incomplete without asking the reader to accompany us on a hunting excursion; so I will describe one which took place after El Sourdo had arrived on the island. Game had become very scarce in our immediate vicinity, and our only farinaceous food was black beans varied by maize, which was too troublesome in the preparation to be much used. The meat went wonderfully quickly, so we determined to extend the sphere of the hunting a little more afield. Accordingly, one fine frosty morning at daylight, the horses were brought up, caught, and saddled, mantles and spurs donned, and eight of us, including the two Indians, Casimiro and El Sourdo, set off to make a circle, *i.e.*, enclose and drive an area of land on the southern shore of the river, finishing at the Missionaries'